

# Train2Ride: Researching bikes on trains in the West Highlands



HITRANS Rail Stakeholder Conference

29<sup>th</sup> January 2018

# The study

## Context and aims

- Changing rolling stock on West Highland Line:
  - Caledonian Sleeper upgrading in 2018
  - ScotRail rolling stock changes “scenic trains” in 2019
  - Consequences for bikes on trains
- Aims of the study specifically:
  - Establish the current level of demand for on-train cycle carrying on ScotRail services on the West Highland Lines (WHL) and on Serco Caledonian Sleeper services to Inverness and Fort William
  - Identify future trends and options for managing the demand

## Current situation

### – ScotRail

- 156s on West Highland Line, Glasgow to Oban / Mallaig / Fort William
- Capacity for 6 bikes per 2 coach trainset
- Various configurations of trainsets leave Glasgow for West Highlands so actual capacity for bikes varies per service

### – Caledonian Sleeper

- Currently 6 bike spaces per seated 8-car trainset
- Road courier service for surplus bikes

# Potential changes

## – ScotRail

- 158s on West Highland Line
- Less cycle space on board compared to 156s
- Ultimate configurations still being finalised by ScotRail

## – Caledonian Sleeper

- New rolling stock with 10 bike spaces on board
- Road courier service likely to continue for surplus bikes

## Approach to the research

- Analyse actual reservation data for bikes on trains supplied by ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper
- On-board surveys by University of Highlands and Islands of passengers travelling with bikes on ScotRail WHL services and on Caledonian Sleeper services to/from Fort William and Inverness
- Review of practice elsewhere
- Understand drivers of demand in future
- Initial consideration of options to tackle any issues

# Bikes on trains elsewhere



## Bikes on trains elsewhere

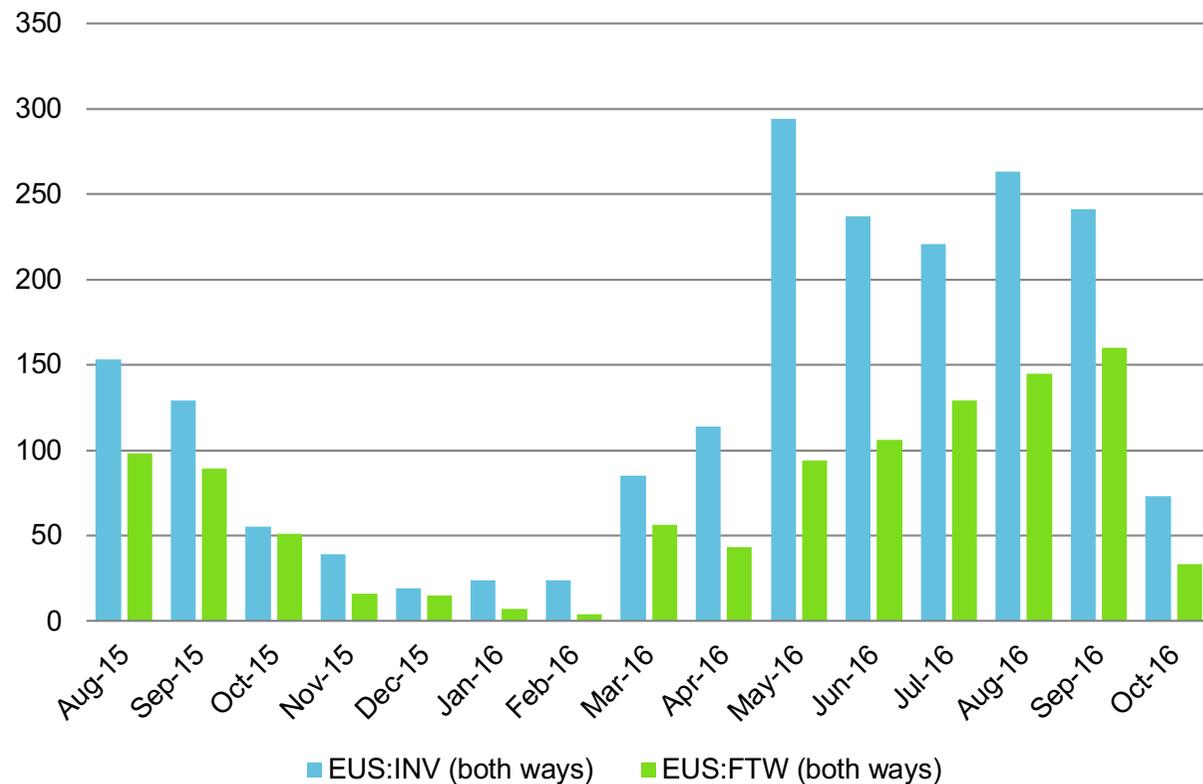
- Norm in the UK is limited carriage of bikes on trains, some peak-time restrictions, reservation in advance advised and/or mandatory, free of charge
- Appears to be more normal to charge for bike carriage outside of the UK and varies in proportion to ticket or flat fare
- Interesting examples to note:
  - Great Western Railways, Brompton bike hire
  - Arriva Trains, bike symbol on carriage door
  - Bike boxes (Eurostar, Canada)
  - Bike rental from stations (Bike & Go in UK, Netherlands, Blue Bike in Belgium)

# Reservation data



# Caledonian Sleeper

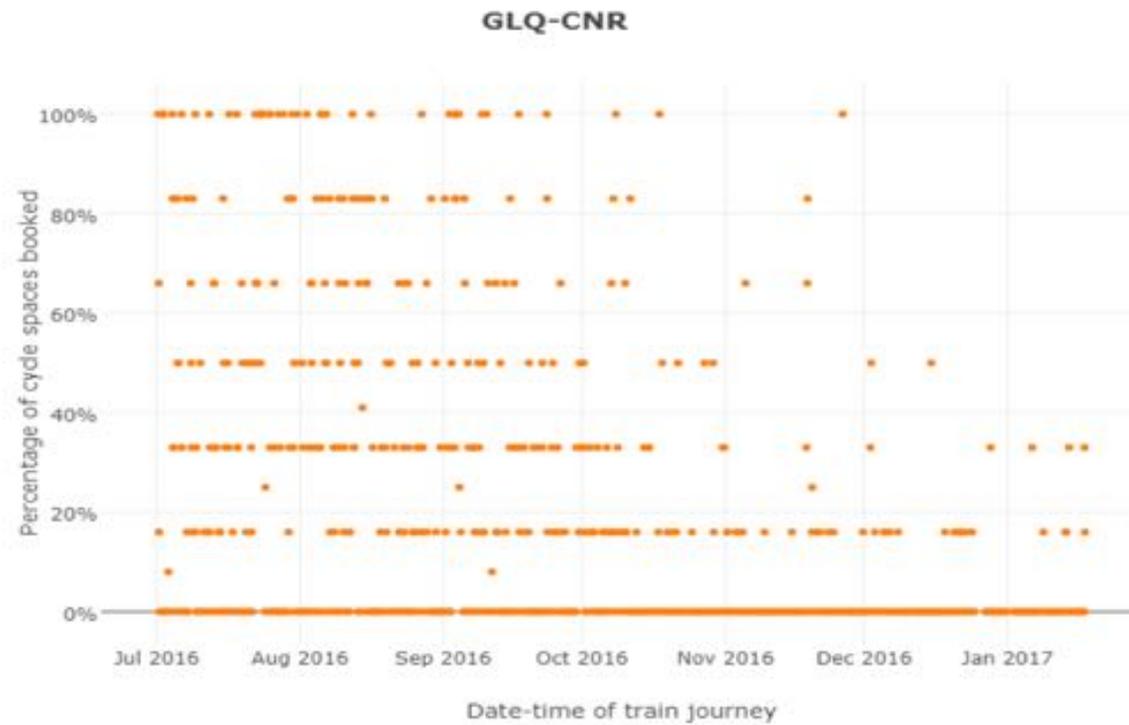
- Clear seasonal peaks
- Inverness route is most in demand for bikes on trains
- Over a year of data for all routes, around a fifth of bookings had to use courier



# ScotRail

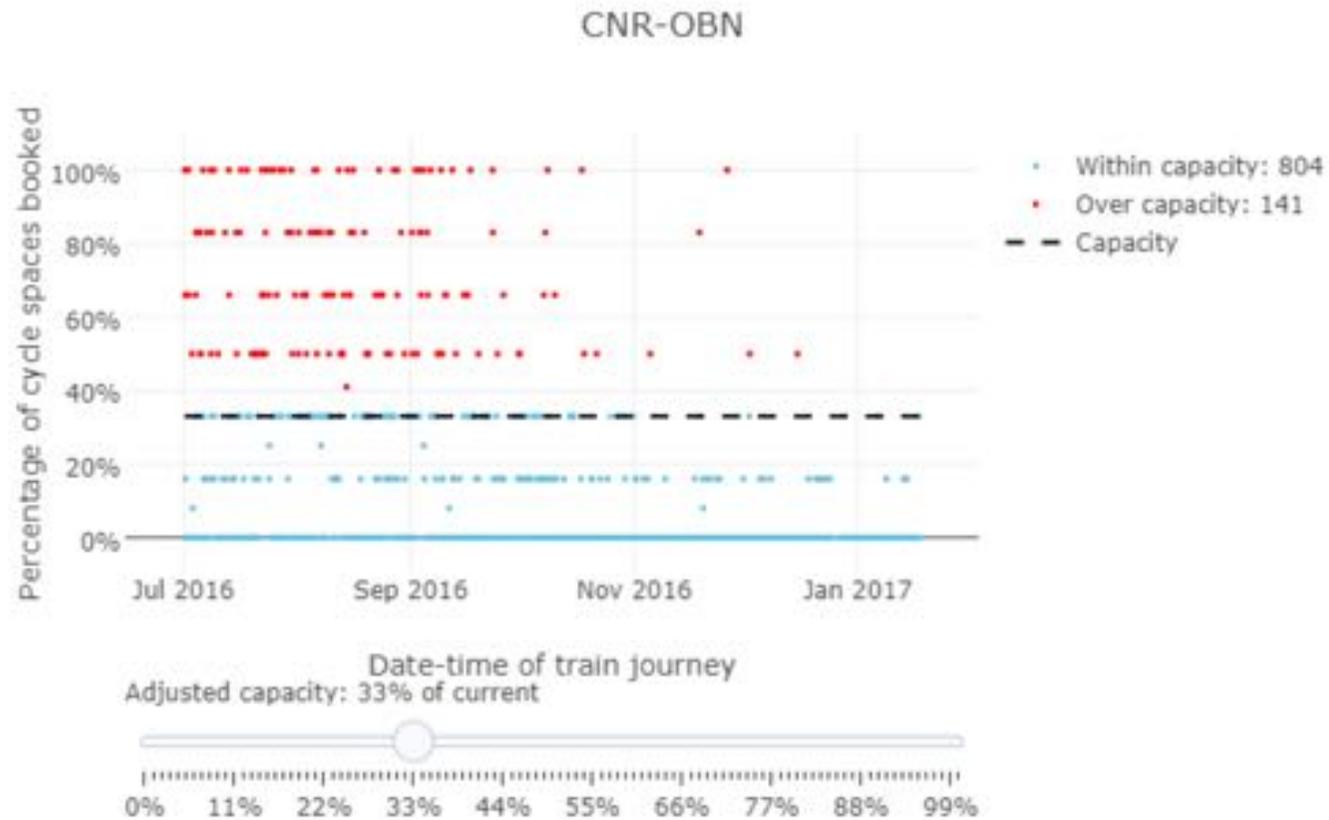
- Cycle reservation data for WHL Jul 2016-Jan 2017
- Bookings shown per journey leg and against total cycle capacity per leg (not in between stations)
- In total, over 7000 journey legs analysed
  - Just under 2% of these had instances of cycle spaces being fully booked
- But.....highly seasonal & weekend demand and some legs in demand for cycle carriage
  - e.g. Glasgow-Crianlarich, Crianlarich-Oban, Fort William-Glasgow
  - e.g. 0821 from Glasgow Queen Street

# ScotRail – example analysis

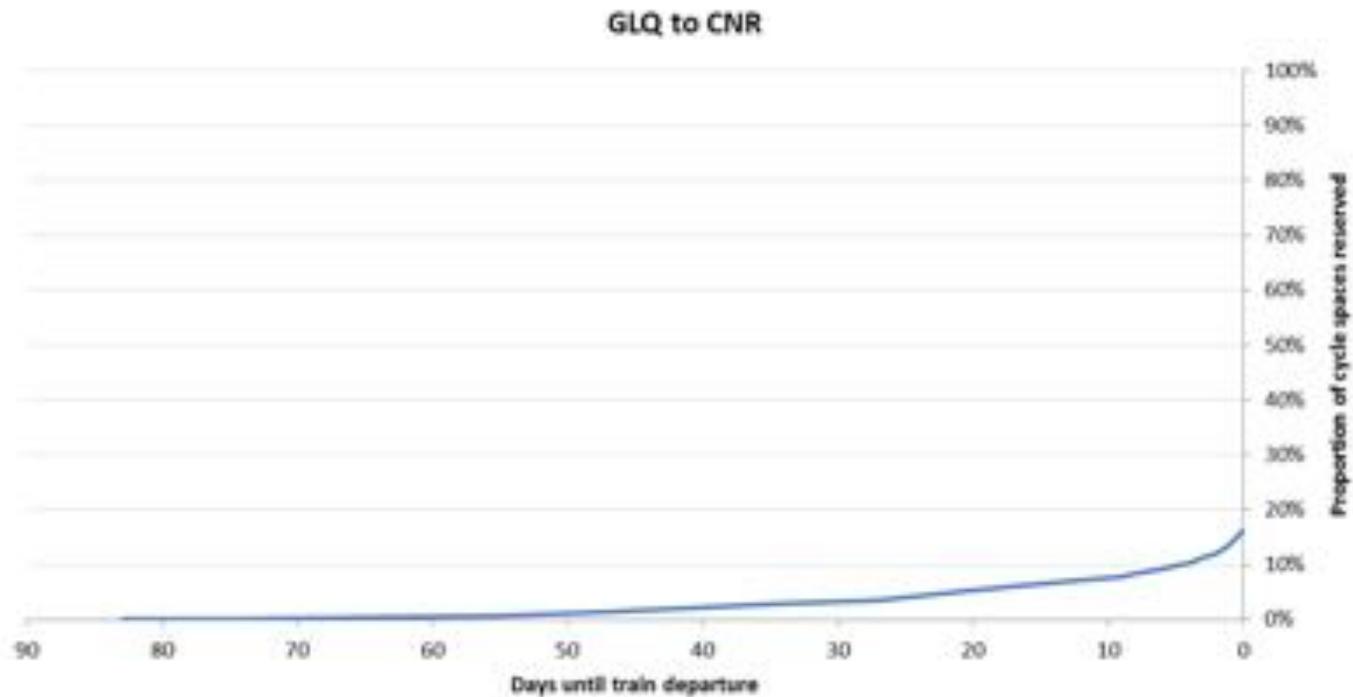


Percentage of cycle spaces booked	Frequency
0	604
8	2
16	102
25	3
33	80
41	1
50	45
66	31
83	30
100	38

# ScotRail – example analysis



# ScotRail – when do people book their bike spaces?



# On-board surveys and counts



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# On-board counts of bike-carrying passengers

- University of Highlands and Islands, and survey work reviewed by Sustrans
- Small sample size but a snapshot of activity over three July days (Fri, Sat, Mon) on ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper services on WHL (and latter to Inverness also)
- Around a third of spaces on ScotRail services appeared to have cycle reservations according to booking system
  - But more bikes counted than booked so some degree of informal cycle carriage going on
  - And some cases where less bikes on-board than booked
- 4 instances observed where people unable to board with bikes (ScotRail)
- Sleeper – some informal cycle carriage also

# On-board surveys of bike-carrying passengers

- ScotRail bike carrying passengers (sample size: just under 100)
  - Majority travelling for leisure (cycling holiday) and median of 7 nights away
  - Around two-thirds planning on cycling more than 100 miles
  - 38% said first time to region, and scenery key factor in decision – significant majority said they would recommend the area for cycle tourism
  - Strong link to ferries – three-quarters planning to use a ferry during their trip, and strong usage of NCN
  - 31% said never brought a bike on train before – those with UK origin more likely to have brought bike on train previously
  - About a third said they wouldn't have made the trip without their bike on train, a quarter said they would have brought bike by car instead

# On-board surveys of bike-carrying passengers

- ScotRail bike carrying passengers
  - Quarter said they had got on the train without a bike reservation
  - Two thirds said they have booked up to 30 days in advance
  - Half said they found the booking process easy, and just over half said they had experienced issues taking bike on train (though some comments were about journey to Scotland)
  - Most common type of bike – touring bike
  - Two-thirds said bike worth more than £500, over a quarter said bike worth more than £1k
  - Two-thirds male, and 25-34 most commonly cited age group, followed by 45-54 then 55-64
  - Around 60% said they would be willing to pay for bike carriage – most around £5, some up to £10

# On-board surveys of bike-carrying passengers

- Sleeper bike carrying passengers (compared to ScotRail sample)
  - Smaller sample, just over 30
  - More likely to say would not have made the trip at all if no bike on train
  - More likely to say they found it easy to book bike on train
  - More likely to say they'd never brought a bike on a train in Scotland before
  - High value bikes, and touring bikes
  - Around same proportion willing to pay for bike on train, but would be willing to pay a higher amount
  - Possibly more likely to be away from home for longer period of time
  - More likely to book bike in advance
  - Almost all on cycling holiday
  - Slightly younger profile and majority male

# Looking to the future

# Factors driving demand

- Some cycling infrastructure improvements and increasing promotion for leisure and tourism
- Research by West Highland Community Rail Partnership
  - Infrequency of services and cost are barriers to use of local rail services
  - Visitors opting for perceived flexibility of car
- Revolution in Rail and the West Highland Line as a Great Scenic Rail Journey
- Visit Scotland: Cars most popular mode used by domestic visitors though rail has increased since economic downturn



# Factors driving demand

- Key trends forecast by Visit Scotland include wild outdoors, health, sustainability, smart technology, fluid itinerary
  - Wild about Argyll
- Mountain biking in Fort William, Inverness predicted to see major visitor growth
- Cycle tourism
- Cycle hire including at stations
- Transport integration – bikes on buses



# Options for the future

# Coping with demand for bikes on trains

- Retention of existing 156s
- Reconfiguration of 158s to create more bike space or removal of seating or toilet facilities
- Dedicated bike carriage / van
- Occasional use of HSTs
- Surplus bikes by road
- Bikes on buses, bike buses
- Discounted bike hire
- Charging for cycle carriage
- Better information about number of bike spaces on board and use of technology

